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7-9-2018

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Communications and Marketing, "Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education Supports New Initiative at Morris" (2018). *Campus News Archive*. 2451.
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Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education Supports New Initiative at UMN Morris

The \$10,000 planning grant will close attainment gaps for American Indian students.

The University of Minnesota Morris received a \$10,000 award from the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), with the support of the Lumina Foundation. The grant will make possible a new project to close attainment gaps for American Indian students.

The Morris team intends to put in place a plan of action that will add peer cohorts and programming for American Indian students entering with declared majors in STEM fields. The team also will work with campus partners to identify areas of progress and opportunity in closing college achievement gaps for these students.

The only Native American-Serving Nontribal Institution in the Upper Midwest, Morris has come to support a growing number of American Indian students over the last three decades, with 320 enrolled in fall 2017. The campus is situated on lands first inhabited by indigenous peoples and that later housed an American Indian boarding school. Today Morris admits eligible American Indian students [tuition-free](#). The campus's unique history and student body suit it to the kind of work WICHE and Lumina support.

The grant allows the campus to build on work supported by its 2016 [Native American-Serving Nontribal Institutions Program \(NASNTI\) grant from the U.S. Department of Education](#). It is expected not only to boost educational attainment of American Indian students at Morris (47% of whom are members and descendants of Minnesota's 11 tribes), but also to inform the national conversation on barriers experienced by American Indian students.

"Our singular history, mission, and programming provide a unique perspective to develop and study the retention impacts of culturally appropriate, high-impact educational practices," says Chancellor Michelle Behr. "We are proud to contribute to this important initiative."

"Reducing the Postsecondary Attainment Gap for Native American Serving Non-Tribal Institutions" began this spring and will continue through April 2020.

About WICHE

The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education is a regional organization created by the Western Regional Education Compact and adopted in the 1950s by Western states. WICHE was created to facilitate resource sharing among the higher education systems of the West. Learn more at wiche.edu

About Lumina Foundation

Lumina Foundation is an independent, private foundation in Indianapolis that is committed to making opportunities for learning beyond high school available to all. Learn more at luminafoundation.org